

Governor Rell Prepares State For Heat Wave, Asks Urban Leaders to Set Up Cooling Centers

Heat Index Expected to Reach Dangerous Levels This Week

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced that she is contacting municipal leaders, particularly those with urban centers, to consider setting up cooling shelters for those who need to escape the high heat and oppressive humidity expected in the state over the next several days.

“The dangerous combination of temperatures in the 90s and excessive high humidity will make it actually feel like 100 degrees or more. This can be a tremendously dangerous situation for senior citizens, young children and those who must work outside,” Governor Rell said. “The cooling centers are safe places those individuals with no air conditioning or other means to escape the heat.”

The heat wave is expected to continue for much of this week, with the most dangerous heat index, a measurement of temperature and humidity, forecast for tomorrow. The Governor is asking local leaders to provide the state with locations of cooling centers so that they can be disseminated through the statewide InfoLine 2-1-1 and state Department of Social Services networks.

Governor Rell said the state is monitoring the capabilities of utility companies and ISO New England, which manages the regional power grid, to ensure there is enough capacity to handle the anticipated high electrical demand. The Governor also said state troopers, who have been on increased patrols due to the long holiday weekend, have been directed to check on stranded motorists and rest stops.

“We are encouraging everyone use common sense to stay safe during this heat wave. The conditions can be life-threatening for our most vulnerable citizens, especially the elderly,” the Governor said. “For those with elderly neighbors, please consider looking in on them to make sure they are safe.”

The Governor said the state Department of Public Health is offering the following safety tips:

- Drink more fluids (nonalcoholic), regardless of your activity level. Don’t wait until you are thirsty to drink. Warning: If your doctor generally limits the amount of fluid you drink or has you on water pills, ask him/her how much you should drink while the weather is hot.
- Don’t drink liquids that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar—these

actually cause you to lose more body fluid. Also, avoid very cold drinks, because they can cause stomach cramps.

- Stay indoors and, if at all possible, stay in an air-conditioned place. If your home does not have air conditioning, go to the movies, shopping mall, public library, or a friend's house/apartment with air conditioning—even a few hours spent in an air conditioned environment can help your body stay cooler when you go back into the heat.
- Electric fans may provide comfort, but when the temperature is in the high 90s, fans will not prevent heat-related illness. Taking a cool shower or bath, or moving to an air-conditioned place is a much better way to cool off.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- Although anyone at any time can suffer from heat-related illness, some people are at greater risk than others. Check regularly on: infants and young children, people aged 65 or older, people who have a mental illness, and those who are physically ill, especially with heart disease or high blood pressure. Visit adults at risk at least twice a day and closely watch them for signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Infants and young children need much more frequent watching.
- If you must be out in the heat, limit your outdoor activity to early morning and evening hours. Cut down on exercise. If you must exercise, drink two to four glasses of cool, nonalcoholic fluids each hour. A sports beverage can replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat. Warning: If you are on a low-salt diet, talk with your doctor before drinking a sports beverage.
- Try to rest often in shady areas.
- Protect yourself from the sun by wearing a wide-brimmed hat (also keeps you cooler) and sunglasses and by putting on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher (the most effective products say “UVA/UVB protection” on their labels).

It is important to become familiar with the signs and symptoms of heat stroke, heat stress, and heat cramps, and to have an action plan so that you will know what to do if you see these signs and symptoms:

- **HEAT STROKE** is the most serious heat-related illness and is accompanied by hot, dry skin; shallow breathing; a rapid, weak pulse; and confusion. Heat stroke occurs when a person's body temperature exceeds 105 degrees Fahrenheit and could render the victim unconscious. If you believe that someone has heat stroke, call for emergency medical treatment or have the person taken to the hospital immediately. While waiting for emergency personnel, move the victim to a cool area out of direct sunlight; sponge bathe with cool water; and fan. If possible, relocate the person to an air-conditioned room.
- **HEAT EXHAUSTION** is characterized by heavy sweating, weakness and cold, pale, clammy skin. There may also be fainting and vomiting. If someone appears to be suffering from heat exhaustion, they should be moved to a cool area out of direct sunlight, sponge bathed with cool water and fanned. Also, give sips of water to the individual every 15 minutes for one hour.
- **HEAT CRAMPS** are characterized by painful spasms, usually in muscles of the legs and abdomen and by heavy sweating. To relieve heat cramps, apply firm

pressure on cramping muscles or gently massage the muscles. As in the case of heat exhaustion, give sips of water every 15 minutes for one hour.